2. Department of Consumer Affairs had examined the suggestion. It was noted that under the existing provisions of the Packaged Commodities Rules, 1977, the manufacturer/packer is obliged to make, *inter alia,* declaration of retail sale price in the form of Maximum Retail Price (MRP) inclusive of all taxes.

2.1 There are practical difficulties to implement the suggestion in view of the fact that:—

(a) Determination of the factory price or the selling price by the manufacturer is influenced by factors such as octroi, entry tax, sales tax, surcharge (if any) which varies from State of State;

(b) Beside, ex-factory price or the selling price also varied for different classes of purchasers such as institutional buyers, defence service buyers, discounts offered, wholesale buyers or for retail trade;

(c) Often items of mass consumption are sold by the manufacturer/packer in small packs for daily use and at retail purchasable price level. The printing space on the rappers of the packages of such small packs is very limited and it does not lend itself to the addition of one more element of marking suggested.

3. Department of Consumer Affairs has requested the Ministry of Finance to bring about suitable changes in the Central Excise Laws to collect duty on the basis of MRP instead of ex-factory price of pre-packed commodities. This has been done to protect the interest of the consumers as it discourages manufacturers/packers from inflating MRP in their products well beyond the ex-factory prices. Since 1997, progressively changes have been made in the Finance Bills to include increasing number of items under Central Excise Rules for levying duty on MRP basis.

Food insecurity Atlas of Urban India

*323. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Nagpur has been ranked at the lowest level *i.e.* 18th while Pune is on 1st position on the food

security index in the Food Insecurity Atlas of Urban India compiled by Swaminathan Research Foundation in collaboration with the World Food Programme; and

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take to ensure that food security (an essential input) is maintained at comparatively even levels atleast in metropolitan cities to begin with, with provision to gradually eliminate insecurity in food level all over the country?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The following steps have been taken by the Government of India to promote food security:—

(i) Sufficient buffer stocks of foodgrains are maintained on a year-round basis in keeping with the prescribed Minimum Buffer stocking norms for food security so that, among other things, emergent situations arising out of unexpected crop failure, natural disasters, etc. can be met.

(ii) Distribution of foodgrains under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) is done through a vast distribution network of about 4.60 lakh Fair Price Shops (FPSs), of which around 72,000 FPSs are located in urban areas, including in metropolitan cities. The Central Government has been making allocation of foodgrains under the TPDS to the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations for distribution to Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line families at the rate of 35 kg. per family per month at subsidized rates.

(iii) The thrust in the TPDS is to include the really poor and vulnerable sections of the society, not only in the rural areas, but also slum dwellers and persons earning their livelihood, on daily basis, like porters, rickshaw-pullers, hand-cart pullers and fruit and flower sellers on the pavements in urban areas.

(iv) In order to address the needs of the one crore poorest of the poor families, the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) is being implemented in all parts of the country under which foodgrains are issued at the highly subsidized price of Rs. 2 per kg. for wheat and Rs. 3 per kg. for rice.

(v) Foodgrains are also being allocated under various Welfare Schemes like the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and Annapurna Scheme.

(vi) Financial empowerment through provision of gainful employment is a major vehicle for ensuring food security, as it enable the family to purchase its requirements from the open market. The Sampoorna Gramin Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) provides both wage employment and foodgrains in rural areas. In urban areas, schemes such as the Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) are under implementation for providing self-employment and wage-employment to the urban poor.

Indian fishermen captured by Pakistan Marine Security Agency

*324. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indian fishermen and boats captured by the Pakistan Marine Security Agency and since when they have been captured; and

(b) the action taken by his Ministry to get the fishermen released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) As per available information, Pakistan has 360 Indian fishermen and 58 boats in its custody, which were apprehended by Pakistan Marine Security Agency since January, 2002.

(b) Government have repeatedly taken up the issue of their release and repatriation with the Government of Pakistan. As a result, 281 fishermen have been granted consular access. The issue of grant of consular access to the remaining fishermen and the early release of all the fishermen has been repeatedly pursued with the Government of Pakistan.